

# Representation of Identical Hybridity and Anglo-Indianism in Glen Duncan's: The Blood Stone Papers

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## Abstract

Great events of diaspora were marked from the beginning of colonial era in history. Migration of masses from the British colonies not only end in the Western countries but also to South Asian countries. The past two generations of migrants faced problems of migration in their path of growth, improvising their life conditions, to find their self-identity and self-discovery of community not as the British, not as Asians but just as human beings. The journey of searching own-self involves struggles and pains without receiving a positive result many times. The present paper deals with the diasporic experiences and quest for identity of Anglo-Indian characteristics from the Glen Duncan's novel, The Bloodstone Papers. Even though the motherland, India, neglects the Anglo-Indian migrants' characters in the novel coming from the English land, they always look at England as their fatherland. Hence the pain stakes during the years of partition are portrayed and well narrated by Duncan in his work of art and the present paper as well.

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Anglo-Indianism, Cultural hybridity.

## INTRODUCTION

Glen Duncan, the fourth son of the Anglo-Indian family was born in Bolton, UK. Of four children, he is the only son born in the United Kingdom. Learning literature and philosophy, he moved to London 1990. His job at a bookshop transferred him a writer. Writing medicated his mind from being unfit living in England under the envelope of beige. His painful introvert personal regrets created The Bloodstone Papers in 2006. The novel is his most intimate and personal. The semi-autobiographical novel traces the trails followed by his Anglo-Indian parents and their life. He fused historical scenario and real life environment in the postcolonial perspective of the double-nature of ethnic issue as an Anglo-

Indian misfitting himself in his mother country, India then in England.

The Bloodstone Papers, the renaissance novel has the content that the author has taken a step back from his Anglo-Indian origin to focus on identity. His major emphasis is the story of his family. Duncan published the book after his trip to India with his father during the middle of his twenties. Till then he could not recognize the track of his life. Bearing this unfathomable identity and deep regrets about his life, he confesses about the unknown paths of his life. The in depth miseries about his cultural hybridity and wholesome life instigated him to pen the novel.

The mixture of real life and fictional story speaks about Ross, an Anglo-Indian and

Kate Monroe and their lives during the reign of British Raj as half-cast and their reaching to Britain. The story has been divided into two blocks chronologically – the life in London and the life of his parents in India. The life in London set in 2004, represents the forty year old Owen Monroe, youngest son of Ross and Kate. The life India represents the life of his parents from the years of their childhood to the period of Partition. The story narration has its structure of Owen's present life and *The Cheechee Papers*, which means about his parents in particular.

*The Cheechee Papers* provides a precise information of Glen Duncan's alter ego, Owen and his pathetic Anglo-Indian life. The Anglo-Indianism discovers the path of his life as the outcast communal life. Driven by curiosity to learn about his inheritance and origin, he tries to understand himself more. Hence the alternated structure of the novel reflects Ross's suppressed diasporic life. Owen hunts for Skinner, who is suspected to have stolen the Blood Stone and is involved in his parent's life as well. Owen brings out the trace of his parents, Ross and Kate, in their mother country in the draft he writes.

Duncan probes about the meaning of Anglo-Indian and the consciousness of the conditions in which the community live through the novel. He focuses on the sect that they have been forgotten by the rest of the world and their losing of cultural heritage. Duncan through Owen questions himself that he is in the same condition created by his parents. He is the direct witness of his parents, also be called as the first generation immigrants does not know how to deal the problems with his origins or heritage which his father owns. He is ignorant that being the citizen of Britain, he does not even understand if he has ever been felt to be an Anglo-Indian.

Owen had felt the humiliation of ethnicity of his skin during his childhood and adolescence. The event when Scarlett, his Anglo-Indian girlfriend, and he was called to witness a harassment which the school principal accused them because of being beige. He says, "beige Bloody Anglo-Indian" (TBP

358). The colour represents other ethnics and it exposes the mixed blood of the Anglo-Indians. Their community is invisible amongst the British community and beige is considered the weakness in that society. Comparing his skin colour and the native ethnicities, Owen realizes, "he is not dark enough either to scare the honkies or to expect solidarity from the brothers" (TBP 34). He could not attain social redemption for an unknown identity. His leads his life surviving under a minority group. It is easy to understand the distress of Owen when he says that he feels uncomfortable when writing the book since he does not know anything about being an Anglo-Indian. Thus he says deliberately that he has gaps and lags in the historical knowledge of his origin. He is also afraid to disappoint his parents in writing things that can compromise the already pale image of the Anglo-Indians. His attitude and purposes are good comments being a detached person, he says,

*Part of being Anglo-Indian [...] is being a member of a race which to all intents and purposes simply doesn't register, historically. Too few of us, you see. We're invisible. What I'm thinking is that this invisibility creates at best a kind of unconcern for the world – since as far as the world's concerned we're not here, never were, so it's not, realistically, "our" world at all – and at worst a ring-of-Gyges relationship to morality. (TBP 106)*

Owen's success in writing project has not provided success and so he hunts for Skinner with his father and finally wishes to be the part of the story. Beyond the story of his parents, the writing of the book encourages Owen to seek for historical information about his community. He plunges into the historical archives to delineate the origins of the Anglo-Indians from the first centuries of the colonization of India by the East India Company and later the British Crown, to the dispersion of nowadays. Thus, the understanding of the historical context becomes crucial not only to tell the story of Ross and Kate but even to understand the source of the discrimination, and why today British people ignore the existence of this minority. By

the time Owen Monroe finally decides to write the story of his parents, he is a Professor at University College London, with a parallel career as an author of pornnovels who writes under the pseudonym of Millicent Nash, name that he obtained combining the middle name of his mother with his paternal grandmother's maidenname. He lives in an apartment in London with Vince, his gay friend with whom he shares not only a flat but also a miserable existence made of regrets and complaints.

The hunting for Skinner and the investigation on his lost origins are specular to another chapter of his life that after many years he still struggles to his closest, Scarlet, the love of his life, childhood friend and biggest regret. Although he has lost contacts with her for years, he still has difficulties to forget her and to go on with his life. The memory of Scarlet is always by his side, impeding him to engage in a new relationship, as he is aware that every time he goes out with a new girl he is just "killing time until Scarlet comes back" into his life. (TBP170) In the meantime, he continues collecting casual lovers, including Skinner's daughter, the woman he would use to find his father's obsession. Scarlet comes into Owen's life as a comet, but she has shared enough with him to become also the missing tale in his attempt of recovery of identity, as he would not be able to close the whole Skinner's matter until Scarlet goes back to him.

Scarlet lived with the Monroe family when she was a little girl, because her Anglo-Indian mother, Dinah, was suffering from schizophrenia. Almost being the same age as Scarlet, Owen linked with the girl due to the ethnic affinity, as their hands "among the red, white and blue Lego brick had revealed that [they] were exactly the same colour" (TBP217). Owen finds the difference between him, his ethnicity and the other minority communities of Britain. He keenly contemplates Scarlet saying about her mother's boyfriend,

"Dinah niggerbitch", he feels confused about the choice of word in this offence:

*"A nigger's a Jamaican" I said. Taxonomy courtesy of Brewer Street. Niggers, nig-nogs, darkies, coons, blackies and chocolate drops were onething, Pakis and wogs were another. Muhammad Ali, for example, was acoon, whereas Mr. Gandhi was a Paki. (TBP220)*

This clearly makes him to understand his stature of Anglo-Indian pathetic life in the country.

The bullying acts of the natives were highly intolerable and is tolerated invisibly for the Anglo-Indians.

It was the first time in my life I'd ever had to take personal experience and make it count in the political world, the school. And the world, the school said: It doesn't count. We don't believe you. Your money's no good here.

*Ergo, we rejected the political in favour of the personal, tragically or otherwise for the rest of our lives. That's what you're talking about on the roof, isn't it? Not caring because you're not part of it? I think all Anglo-Indians fell like that actually (TBP358)*

Duncan has expressively spitted out these sentences through Owen which makes the readers towards various interpretations. A kind of isolation of the Anglo-Indians from the British environment bewilders him how to get melted into the society both as ethnic or native English. He acknowledges, "You need a fucking ethnographic microscope to see us" (TBP 40). This is the reality he experiences with his Anglo-Indianism. The isolation and quest for identity in the English land follows the non-natives since the time of the British Raj.

Considering the connection with the novel, other British-Indian novelists also portrayed the theme of Duncan's novel. In spite of others' exposure of identical motifs, Duncan has processed various facets of integrity into the society of the British. Even though they live in the English society, in comparison with hybrid characters, their life is not favoured them to be completely accepted as Britishers.

The novel, *Bloodstone Papers* does not propose a solution for the inconsistency of the

Politics of Home, Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Anglo-Indians in Britain, but at least Duncan has managed to turn on the light on an issue never considered before, and to describe faithfully one of the most recent diasporic events.

Their nationality is no more to be ashamed of. Hence diaspora acquires the meaning to recover cultural memory and revamping of migrant's identity. In the case of Monroe's family, Britain is considered their fatherland. The physical journey of the Monroe's from India to England, is already a sort of return to their home, and then, the end of the journey. Almeida suggests that, as Anglo-Indians were already discriminated by the Indians in their mother country,

*They might be labelled 'refugees' in their attempt to escape from India to migrate to Great Britain on grounds of being afraid for their lives. In such cases, the decision to migrate was as much a matter of ensuring their personal safety as it was to find a better, more comfortable, quality of life in what they believed would be a more welcoming environment. (2015:4-5)*

Thus, Ross and Owen's attempt to go back to their origins formally has not the same meaning of the other diasporic experiences depicted. However, it keeps the characteristics of the search for identity is why one can talk about a diasporic journey for the Anglo-Indians.

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